

VZCZCXRO3369  
RR RUEHAG RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHMD #1212/01 3230810  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 180810Z NOV 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5588  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA 3658

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 MADRID 001212

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2018

TAGS: [OREP](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL SIRES VISIT TO MADRID, NOVEMBER 13-14, 2008

MADRID 00001212 001.2 OF 005

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION ARNOLD A. CHACON, REASONS 1.4B,  
[1D](#).

[11](#). (U) Summary: Codel Sires (Representatives Albio Sires, Lynn Woolsey, Phil Gingrey, Ron Klein, and Laura Richardson) visited Madrid November 13-14 to discuss rail transportation security, counter-terrorism, and bilateral relations. They met with Minister of Interior Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, Minister of Public Works Magdalena Alvarez, Office of the Presidency Director of the Department of International Politics and Security Milagros Hernandez, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Miguel Angel Moratinos. Codel Sires also toured the scene of the March 11, 2004, Atocha train station bombing. End summary.

Minister of Interior  
-----

[12](#). (C) In a meeting that ran over 90 minutes, Interior Minister Rubalcaba opened by describing the counter-narcotics and anti-organized crime relationship with the U.S. as "excellent." He singled out DEA and FBI in this regard. He said the counter-terrorism relationship was "good" but noted CT was a more complex challenge. Rubalcaba said Spain would make improving the transatlantic CT relationship a priority during its EU Presidency in the first half of 2010. He noted Spain and the UK had suffered most grievously from terrorism among European nations. He mentioned Spain,s unique position on the southern border of Europe in proximity to North Africa, the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and the history of Al Andalus (frequently mentioned in al-Qaeda propaganda) as factors which increased Spain,s profile for terrorists.

[13](#). (C) Rubalcaba briefly explained Spain,s law enforcement and intelligence structures (Civil Guard and National Police and a centralized intelligence service in CNI plus the Civil Guard, National Police, military intelligence units). He also mentioned Spain,s creation of an NCTC equivalent (the CNCA).

[14](#). (C) Rep. Sires offered condolences on the recent loss of two Spanish soldiers in Afghanistan, and thanks for Spain,s efforts there as well as for the strong military-to-military relationship. Rep. Woolsey added her thanks for Spain,s work in Afghanistan, saying that many Americans understood Spain,s reasons for withdrawing from Iraq. She asked what should be done next in Afghanistan. Rubalcaba said that Spain would stick with its allies in Afghanistan and would leave when the U.S. leaves. He joked that while in general the Minister of Interior had more headaches than the Minister of Defense, Afghanistan was the one case where he did not envy his cabinet colleague. Nevertheless, he said he would offer a personal opinion on Afghanistan: the allies were losing. The Taliban was pushing back hard and attacks were on the rise. He said two years ago there were virtually no attacks on their forces, last year the attacks rose to two a week, now they were seeing four to five attacks a week. In his

opinion Afghanistan was going backward both militarily and socially. He noted the effects of the drug trade and said allied efforts to build the government, the security forces, and infrastructure were not perceived by the populace as valid. Rubalcaba said the allied forces were being seen as invaders rather than builders. He said the allies needed to change their approach to avoid repeating the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. He suggested more funding was needed and needed to be spent more effectively so the Afghans would believe that allied help was moving them forward. He said there was a need for social action that perhaps the militaries were not able to perform. He opined that more countries should be involved in the effort, maybe even Russia. Finally, he emphasized building a civilian police force, something he said the military could not do, suggesting perhaps that was a role for the EU.

15. (C) Rep. Klein urged continued Spanish support for Iraq. He also urged Spain to take a greater role in Afghanistan along with other countries. Rep. Gingrey said things were improving in Iraq, and the opportunity might exist to draw down in Iraq and put more forces into Afghanistan. Rubalcaba said Spain's position on Iraq was well known, but added Spain realized the need to help Iraq. He said there was no point in focusing on past problems. It was important to Spain that Iraq be a success and to support reconstruction there. He admitted that the economic crisis made it tougher for Spain to help. He said Spain had suffered recessions in the past but the current one was particularly abrupt. He compared it to an arrested landing on an aircraft carrier. Nevertheless, he said Spain was in Afghanistan to stay. He mentioned the importance of Pakistan. Rubalcaba stressed that a changed approach was needed in Afghanistan. He said polls in Spain showed the public understood the mission but nevertheless wanted Spanish troops out of Afghanistan. He

MADRID 00001212 002.2 OF 005

joked that like any Catholic country, Spain presented many contradictions. In Afghanistan, the Spanish public wanted something done but trusted Providence to take care of it. Rubalcaba said the allies needed to discuss new approaches and ways to win. He insisted we could not afford to lose and leave the terrain to the Taliban. He said defeat in Afghanistan would be a huge morale boost to terrorists everywhere.

16. (C) In answer to a question from Rep. Klein, Rubalcaba said Spain had effective controls in place at its airports (he noted getting on a plane in Spain had become an ordeal). He said efforts at sea ports were not as far along. He noted Spain's car ferries (e.g., to the Balearic Islands) presented targets. He also said he was concerned about cargo security, noting that the heavy cocaine flows into Spain meant there was a strong police presence in the ports, which he said was a dissuasion, but he said cargo controls were in their early stages. Rubalcaba noted that North and West Africa were increasing concerns to Spain. He mentioned the activities of al-Qaeda in North Africa and the recomposition of smaller terrorist groups under the al-Qaeda label. He said CT was a global fight that was receding in some places (e.g., the Philippines and Iraq) even as it expanded in others (Afghanistan and North Africa).

17. (C) Asked by Rep. Richardson if he had any message for the delegation to carry home, Rubalcaba said that in any friendship there were periods when one called every day and periods when one called not so often. Spain, he said, wanted to be the "daily call" kind of friend to the U.S. He said it was necessary to reaffirm this because of some of the difficult moments in the past. On CT, Rubalcaba said Spain wanted the same relation with the U.S. it enjoyed on the counter-narcotics effort. He recognized that this was tougher because it involved sensitive intelligence relationships. Finally, Rubalcaba noted that Spain had nearly defeated the U.S. for the gold medal in basketball in the Beijing Olympics. He noted that although he should not

share state secrets, Spain,s plan to infiltrate more players into the NBA was proceeding well.

¶8. (C) Rep. Sires asked about Spain,s attitudes towards the new U.S. President-elect. Rubalcaba said Spain, like all Europe, had watched the election closely. He said Senator Obama had offered a fresh discourse that was in some ways similar to the thinking of the moderate European left. Rubalcaba quickly added that Senator McCain,s concession speech was a "jewel" of democratic politics and he had said as much in the Spanish Congress. He noted Spain took its hat off to Senator McCain. Rubalcaba also commended President Bush,s speech on the transition, saying it spoke volumes about the institutional strength of the U.S. Rubalcaba said Spain would like to be the first country the new President visited, and while he understood that might not be possible, Spain lost nothing by asking. He urged that Obama come to Spain. Rubalcaba said he had been in politics 25 years -- long enough to be considered a museum piece -- but he said he had never seen such high expectations as existed for the new U.S. Administration. He questioned how those expectations could be calmed since meeting them could be a problem.

#### Minster of Public Works

¶9. (U) Minister of Public Works Magdalena Alvarez spent over an hour with the delegation, describing Spain,s 2005-2020 transportation infrastructure plans. She noted that when President Zapatero came to office in 2004, he decided on major changes to transportation infrastructure in Spain. By 2020 Spain intended to increase highways by a factor of two and high-speed rail by a factor of ten. Spain would make a 250 billion euro investment in rail, airports, seaports, and roads of which 50 percent would go to rail. She said Spain had bet heavily on high-speed rail, but thought it was a safe bet. Alvarez noted that in the 15 years prior to 2004, Spain had built 1,000 kilometers of high speed rail, but in the last four years alone Spain had added another 700 kilometers. She said Spain would be the number one country in the world in terms of miles of high-speed track by 2010.

¶10. (SBU) Alvarez noted that the extension of high-speed rail to Barcelona had become a political football in the last general election when the government missed its target for opening the line by 90 days, but she said the delay, which she attributed to the sorts of construction delays typical in any large building project, was minor. (Comment: Construction accidents caused the deaths of workers and interrupted commuter rail traffic in Barcelona for several weeks. End comment.) She added that high-speed lines to Valladolid and Malaga opened on schedule. Alvarez pointed with pride to Spain,s policy of refunding fares if the high

MADRID 00001212 003.2 OF 005

speed train arrived more than 15 minutes late, which she was unique in the world and made possible by the trains 99% on-time record. Alvarez said the high speed lines cost an average of 14 million Euros per kilometer. Funding (at least up until the present) had come from a combination of EU and Spanish sources. Where the lines entered the cities, the state (autonomous community) and local governments helped pay the infrastructure costs. Since most cities wanted the lines underground, the GOS paid the equivalent of surface installation costs and helped defray the remainder by leasing the land above the tunnels, the difference was paid by the state and local governments.

¶11. (SBU) Alvarez explained that one government company, RENFE, was responsible for operating the trains while a second government company, ADIF, operated the stations and associated infrastructure (e.g., parking). The passenger trains were operated by RENFE while freight was handled by a combination of public and private-sector ventures. She noted some of Spain,s high-speed rail lines handled passengers, others freight, and some handled both. She said the freight

lines were more expensive to operate and maintain, but in some areas of Spain the passenger load was simply not adequate to cover the costs. Alvarez said her Ministry cooperated well with the Ministry of Interior on security issues and described in some detail Spain's investment in safety systems for the high-speed trains.

#### International Politics and Security

-----

¶12. (C) President Zapatero's national security advisor, Milagros Hernando, repeated to the delegation what they heard from other interlocutors about Spain's desire to improve bilateral relations. She said Spain intended to use its EU Presidency in the first half of 2010 to promote the transatlantic relationship. Asked by Rep. Klein about more financial assistance for Iraq and more troops for Afghanistan, Hernando said Afghanistan would be an agenda item with the U.S. not just for Spain, but for Europe. She suggested the allies needed to look beyond purely military solutions and added that Zapatero was talking about an EU Council debate on how to energize efforts in Afghanistan. Rep. Woolsey said some in the U.S. would agree the solution cannot be solely military. Responding to Rep. Klein on the subject of Iran, Hernando said Spain tried to follow EU consensus. Asked by Rep. Gingrey about Spain's position on missile defense, Hernando noted the NATO Bucharest Summit declaration but said Spain was concerned about the prudence of the current approach on missile defense. Hernando mentioned that Spain was in the midst of developing a new national security strategy.

#### Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

-----

¶13. (C) Codel Sires met for an hour and a half with Spanish FM Miguel Angel Moratinos. Rep. Sires offered condolences for the recent loss of two Spanish soldiers in Afghanistan. Moratinos thanked the Codel for visiting Spain. He said in looking back over the last (nearly) five years it was regrettable that the two Presidents had not met. He noted the economic relationship between the two countries was strong with considerable investment in both directions. He said the counter-terrorism and military-to-military relationships were excellent (he noted the Spanish military was a customer for sophisticated U.S. weapons systems, to the chagrin of countries such as France). He said that despite the picture presented in the press, the bilateral relationship had strengthened in recent years. He noted the September 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S. and the March 11, 2004, terrorist attacks in Madrid had given an impetus to information-sharing. Moratinos said both countries behaved as strong and loyal allies. In this regard he specifically mentioned U.S. intelligence-sharing when a Spanish fishing boat was captured by Somali pirates in April. Moratinos added that he had very good personal relations with Secretary Rice. He said there were many areas of foreign affairs where Spain and the U.S. could work together.

¶14. (C) Asked by Rep. Sires if the economic crisis would affect Spain's counter-terrorism efforts, Moratinos said the economic crisis was affecting everyone and the main actors needed to work together to fix the problem. Nevertheless, he said it would not affect Spain's fight against terrorism. Moratinos noted that Spain was working towards a goal of 0.7 percent of GDP for development assistance. He suggested the U.S. should increase its spending in that area.

¶15. (C) Turning to Afghanistan, Moratinos said Spain would be a loyal ally in the fight against the Taliban. Rep. Woolsey expressed the hope that the allies would not simply fall into

MADRID 00001212 004.2 OF 005

a strictly military solution in Afghanistan, noting the need for alternative development and counter-narcotics solutions. Moratinos described Spain's "democratic" decision to

withdraw its troops from Iraq in 2004. He lamented the U.S. had not respected this democratic decision. He noted Spain had continued to provide assistance in Iraq and to offer judicial training via the EU. He said Spain looked forward to engaging with the new U.S. Administration on Iraq, and added that Spain had never closed its embassy there. Moratinos said Spain viewed Afghanistan as a different case than Iraq because the invasion there had a legal basis and the need to use force was apparent. He described Spain's efforts in Afghanistan including the PRT in Qal-i-Naw, a contingent in Herat, and the Spanish military training teams (OMLTs). He said Spain was second only to the U.S. in number of casualties it had suffered in Afghanistan. He said Spain knew the price but would maintain its commitment. As far as increasing that commitment, Moratinos said Afghanistan needed not only troops but development and a "social strategy." He noted Spain was working with the UAE and Poland on an agricultural project in Afghanistan. He urged the importance of alternative development projects for Afghanistan and the 2009 elections.

¶16. (C) Rep. Gingrey noted that conditions in Iraq had improved markedly, saying that although certainly mistakes had been made, history might judge the invasion more kindly. Moratinos repeated that Spain was a loyal ally of the U.S. and that the military-to-military relationship was strong. However, he said the current U.S. President declined to see that. Moratinos recalled his first meeting with Secretary Rice and noted both of them had expressed strong views on Iraq. He asserted they had agreed Spain and the U.S. needed to move on, but said that had never happened. Moratinos said the real challenge was the defense of Western values and that Iran was the real problem. He noted the U.S. had done good work on the MEPP, but the question was what role would Iran play? He said we must be united and work together. He questioned how it was possible that the President of Uzbekistan visited the Oval Office but the President of Spain did not. Rep. Klein stressed the need for a collective carrot and stick approach in dealing with Iran. He noted U.S. engagement with Iran was limited; therefore our sanctions had limited effect. A collective approach was key. Moratinos opined that engagement with Syria would help isolate Iran. He noted Iran's influence in Gaza via Hamas, in Lebanon via Hezbollah, in Pakistan, and in Iraq, saying Iran took advantage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moratinos insisted the Arab-Israeli conflict was ripe for progress. He mentioned favorably a recent speech by Shimon Peres at the UN. The world, Moratinos said, was changing. Regarding Iran, Moratinos said the international community must be united, must use a double-track and be firm if Iran did not fulfill its commitments, and must establish dialogue with Iran. He said the Iranian regime was stable and not subject to change. Therefore the policy must be one of containment. He said the regime was under some pressure and wanted engagement with the U.S. The Iranians wanted to be recognized as an important regional player. He suggested Bahrain's ideas about a collective security arrangement might be worthwhile. Moratinos said that if Iran was not contained, they would work through Hamas and Hezbollah to be a "spoiler" in the Middle East.

¶17. (C) Asked by Rep. Richardson about his relations with various Secretaries of State and whether the Codel should carry away any messages, Moratinos again noted he had excellent relations with Secretary Rice and mentioned he hoped to see her in Washington the following week. He mentioned he also knew Vice President-Elect Biden, former Secretary Albright, former Assistant Secretary Susan Rice, and "all" the Clinton Administration Middle East advisors. Moratinos said his message to the U.S. was to focus on European affairs, the Middle East, and Latin America.

¶18. (C) Regarding Europe, Moratinos noted the transatlantic agenda had improved greatly in the last decade. He said the EU was ever more important (e.g., Georgia, the economic crises, etc.) and urged that the U.S. take it more seriously. He asserted the U.S. treated the EU as a "second-tier" partner by not seeking consensus. He said the U.S. and EU



needed to be hand-in-hand and stand together. He suggested this was something that needed to be discussed strategically.

Moratinos said the Middle East was at a critical juncture and was moving towards a final peace settlement. He said both sides recognized they had wasted so much time. Moratinos insisted the role of third parties in resolving the conflict had changed. He recalled that Clinton Administration Middle East negotiator Dennis Ross had excluded him from meetings when was the EU Special Envoy. Moratinos said he was now working informally to support Secretary Rice,s efforts in the Middle East. He expressed

MADRID 00001212 005.2 OF 005

the hope that the new U.S. Administration would realize the roles of the U.S. and Europe could not be the same as in the Clinton years. He again mentioned the need to contain Iran.

¶19. (C) On Latin America, Moratinos said the U.S. should engage in that part of that world. He noted tQU.S. had focused on issues such as Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico, but had not paid broader attention to development in Latin America. He noted the U.S. took a strongly inclusive position regarding NATO expansion, but forgot Latin America. Moratinos said Spain could not guarantee the future of Latin America without U.S. engagement. He noted everyone praised the creation of the EU, but this had been accomplished by developed countries choosing to share prosperity with less-developed neighbors via structural development funds. Moratinos said Latin America now felt "orphaned."

¶20. (C) Rep. Sires asked how Spain and the U.S. could work together to bring democracy to Cuba. He noted European countries had encouraged the transition to democracy in post-Franco Spain. Moratinos replied that one could ask what the U.S. embargo had accomplished. He said the transition to democracy in Spain owed much to European tourism during the Franco years, which had given Spaniards a view of other possibilities. Moratinos, saying he respected the U.S. position, suggested something similar could happen in Cuba if the U.S. lifted its embargo. He noted that the GOC needed to propose change, and Spain had engaged the GOC. He said it was of course unacceptable that political prisoners remained but some had been released. He mentioned he had personally helped get the Cuban spouse of a Spanish citizen released. Rep. Sires said European investment in Cuba did not trickle down to the people. Moratinos said Spain wanted a democratic Cuba but differed with the U.S. on tactics. He said it was better to be present in Cuba than to be absent. He noted Cuba had agreed to accept foreign assistance after the recent hurricanes and that Spain planned to open a cultural center on the island. He said change would not come as quickly as we desired. The Castro regime was very closed, but he asserted U.S. policy made it even more so. He said Spain wanted to make some cracks through which they could work. He noted the Cubans were not easy interlocutors and were "very complicated actors." Nevertheless, he saw a new phase beginning without Fidel and detected a desire for change. He added that the Catholic Church approved of Spain,s policy in Cuba.

Comment  
-----

¶21. (C) The senior-level appointments accorded Codel Sires and the length of those meetings was a clear signal that the Government of Spain is trying to get off on the right foot with the U.S. following our Presidential election.

¶22. (U) Codel Sires did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.  
AGUIRRE